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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTION IS PRESENTED OF AN INTENSIVE DAY AND NIGHT EFFORT INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY, ARCHITECTS, AND EDUCATORS IN THE DESIGN OF AN URBAN SCHOOL FACILITY. FOLLOWING A DESCRIPTION OF THE BACKGROUND AND SETTING OF DUNBAR HIGH SCHOOL, WHICH IS LOCATED IN A BALTIMORE GHETTO, THE CHARETTE PROCEDURES USED IN FORMULATING A SCHOOLHOUSE DESIGN ARE DISCUSSED. (FS)

Experiment in planning an Urban High School:

The Baltimore Charette

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A report from Educational Facilities Laboratories

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Experiment in planning an Urban High School:

The Baltimore Charette

by Sherwood D. Kohn

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Foreword

Charette:
"A final intensive effort to finish a project, particularly an architectural project . . ."

The Baltimore charette wasn't quite the dictionary definition of a charette. It was not the final, but the opening, intensive effort to involve community, bureaucracies, architects, and educators in the design of a schoolhouse.

Dunbar High School is old, tired, and in need of replacement. And, like so many of the used-up buildings in American education, it's in a ghetto. There has been increasingly vocal dissatisfaction with schools built in the central cities and particularly in the ghettos and with the process of building them which has often excluded effective community participation. The Dunbar charette was an experiment in participatory democracy and planning initiated by the United States Office of Education.

Inside Dunbar High School, some of which dates back 54 years, the participants were involved in night and day sessions of sufficient intensity to produce friction, frustration, and creative synthesis of ideas and concepts. The fact that they were there in the school was a constant reminder of the realities with which they had to deal. Stargazing was not part of the curriculum.

Because of Educational Facilities Laboratories' long-standing interest in the improvement of urban schools and in experimental approaches to that end, we agreed to report in depth on the nature and results of the Baltimore charette. Obviously the U.S. Office of Education

was impressed with the results since they now have plans to assist in the funding of some 20 additional school planning charettes.

Bringing together professional planners, architects, committee members, and the various bureaucratic agencies involved in school planning in an intensive day and night effort to establish the basic program, spirit, and preliminary design outline for a school is no substitute for the long professional planning necessary for a superior school building. But it did, in this instance, provide basic inputs for design, and it did permit the various elements in the community to have considerable positive influence on the design of the building which will result.

A school building, is, however, a thing not a process, and the process is valuable to the ultimate architecture only as reflected in the building. So the jury will necessarily still be out on the ultimate value of the Dunbar charette until the new Paul Laurence Dunbar High School is up and functioning.

A charette is obviously not the only way to get a high level of community participation in planning schools, but it is one new and exciting way to do this, and consequently we think that those of you concerned with school planning, particularly in the older and larger cities, will find this report of real interest.

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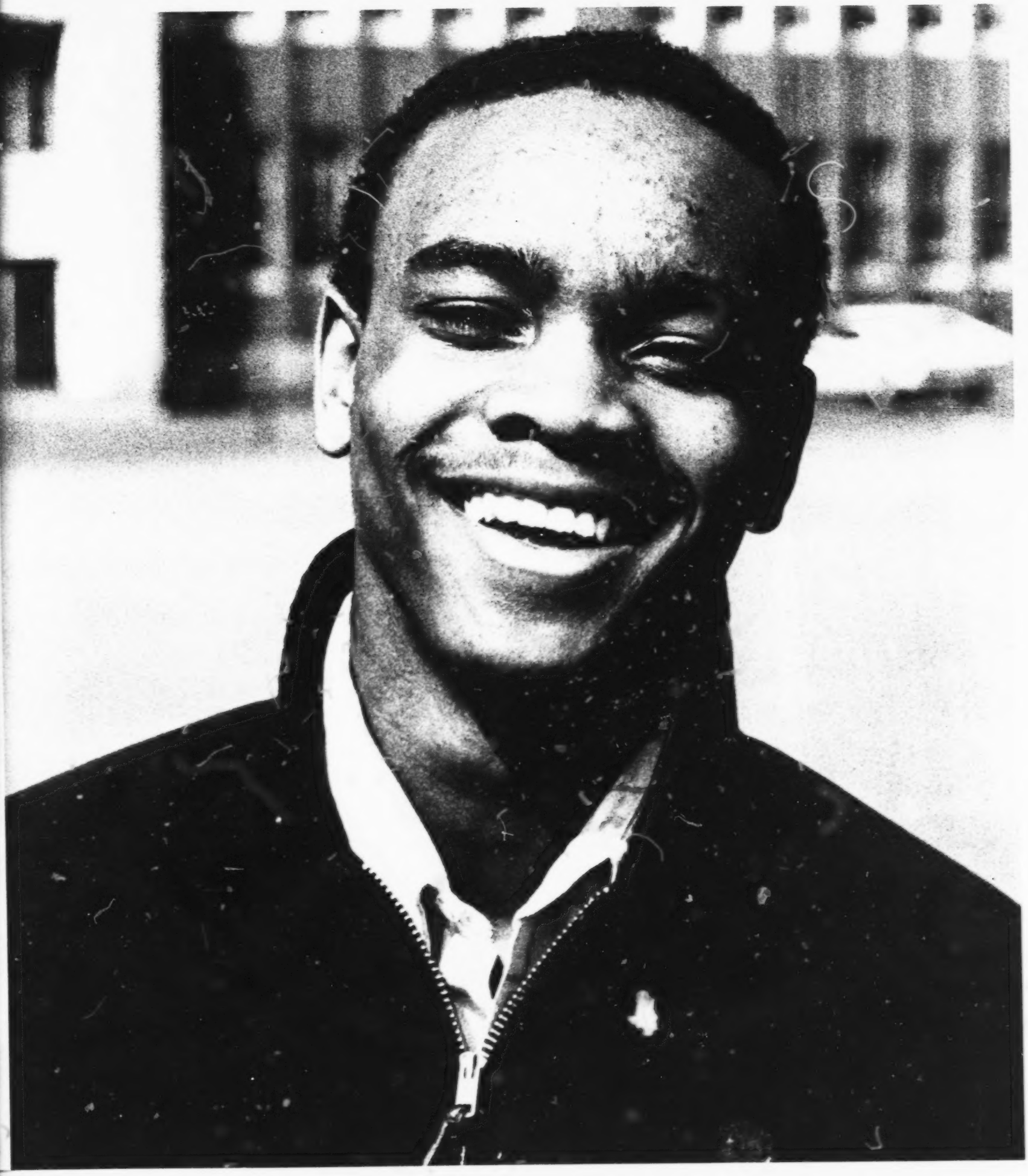


FURNITURE
NEW & USED
DRUGS
TWO WAY TRAFFIC
KEEP RIGHT
FUR TURE
BOUGH SOLD
CURB

The Baltimore Charette

About 100 adults, most of them black residents of East Baltimore, gathered quietly in the girls' gym of Paul Laurence Dunbar High School on the evening of February 28, 1969. They listened with mounting impatience as four community representatives droned on, reporting the results of a two-week, intensive conference aimed at developing educational specifications for a new Dunbar High School.

The meeting in the gym, billed as a "confrontation," but actually quite similar to an old-fashioned New England town meeting, was peaceful, even boring. Baltimore's superintendent of public instruction, Dr. Thomas D. Sheldon, sat impassively in the audience with his administrative aide, Sterling Keyes. A graying, firm-jawed man in his late forties, Sheldon looked like an infantry colonel waiting for the next barrage. He was the only member of the white power structure in the audience.

The opposing batteries were scattered all around Sheldon, but on this night, at least, they weren't aimed in his direction. Some half-dozen Black Panther Party agitators, who had been posting hand-lettered signs and distributing mimeographed handbills denouncing the gathering and its sponsors as "Uncle Tom," were stationed in the audience. Their Afro hair styles and dashikis clearly set them apart from the rather middle-class crowd.

In a corner of the gym, behind a makeshift partition of plywood panels, a group of architects and architecture students—consultants to the planning conference—worked feverishly to translate the tenets of the new Dunbar philosophy into graphic form. The abstract designs, representing a fresh approach to secondary education in the inner city, would be presented to the conference's final meeting on the following day.

As one of the discussion leaders explained site alternatives and land use to the assemblage, a Black Panther, dressed in a black hat and black robe, interrupted, advocating forcible seizure of land for the school. The atmosphere of the meeting was immediately charged with apprehension. The note of violence grew sharper.

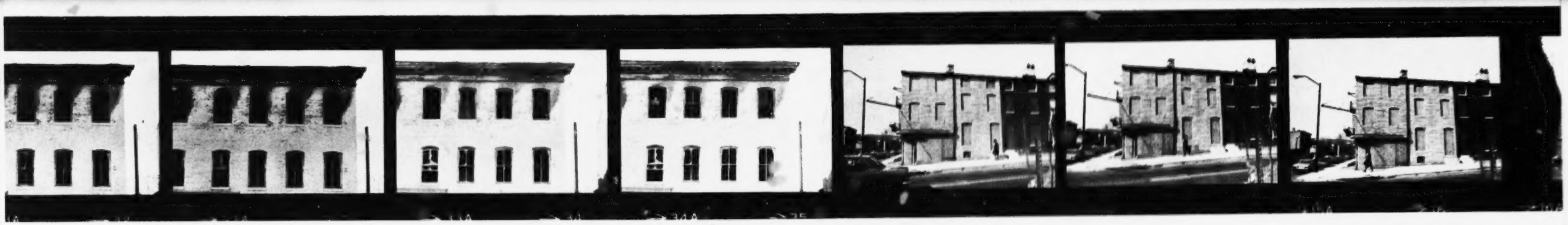
"The only way for the black man to get anything," shouted the Panther, "is to get a gun!" A short, balding man leaped to his feet. "The only thing you'll get that way is a bullet!" he shouted back. "You're like an Oreo cookie," bellowed the Panther, "black on the outside, white on the inside!" The meeting erupted into a bedlam of shouts and recriminations.

Incongruously, the architects continued drawing behind their wooden screens. Their world had nothing to learn from the shouters. The disrupters were too late. The conference had made its proposals, and there had been no objection to them, at least from the moderate element of the community. Racial antagonism was no longer meaningful, and vandalism—intellectual or physical—was no longer an effective force. The black community had progressed from protest to planning.

"For one time," said a member of the audience, "everything was laid on the table. We found out that little people can move big people."

About a million people live in Baltimore, Maryland, a 240-year-old city of red brick, rowhouses, and a congested downtown area that only recently began to emerge from a grayness that the sun failed to penetrate and the city fathers neglected to relieve for more than three generations.

Within the city limits, neither the area nor the population served by any one school can be neatly defined. Baltimore has no school districts. The city's Board of School Commissioners, complying with the U.S.



Supreme Court's desegregation order, decided in favor of open enrollment in 1954. Theoretically, any child within the metropolitan limits can attend any one of Baltimore's 207 public schools.

The area and population served by Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, however, can be more easily described than most, because it is virtually isolated from the rest of Baltimore. The debilitating effects of racial segregation, economic deterioration, and a high crime rate have cut off the southeast quadrant of the city as effectively as a wall. And in one instance —that of Johns Hopkins Hospital—the physical barrier was present during the time of the charette.

Practically speaking, Dunbar High School draws its 1,400 students from an area known only as "East Baltimore," an inner city slum covering about three square miles and inhabited, according to official estimate, by more than 81,000 people. Unofficially, the total is much greater, more than 202,300. In any event, at least 74 per cent of East Baltimore's residents are black, poor, alienated, and disgruntled.

Within East Baltimore, much of which is destined for urban renewal, an average family consists of four persons, average family income is about $2,750 a year, the unemployment rate is 16.7 per cent, and 60 per cent of the population is 18 years old or older.

Like many deteriorated urban residential areas, East Baltimore can be described by a label that we have come to associate with suburbia; it is a bedroom community. Abandoned by its wage earners during the day, devoid of most community service agencies, and lacking a substantial number of lucrative, resident-owned businesses, it offers little more than a place to sleep.

Most of the money earned by East Baltimoreans flows out of the community. Very little remains to help improve conditions. The economic energy of the area is constantly sapped. The fact that its residents lack business acumen, financial resources, and managerial skills contributes immeasurably toward an almost colonial state of dependence.

Actually, East Baltimore barely qualifies as a community. In the past, it has lacked an overriding sense of purpose, an underlying altruism that comes from self-respect. Much of its vitality is dissipated in constant internal power struggles that prevent its residents from acting together for the common good.

The area spreads into Baltimore's 1st and 2nd voting districts, and is almost a political vacuum virtually ignored by the press. Theoretically, East Baltimore is represented by six councilmen, but only one, a black Democrat, is active. At this writing, various factions, including the Black Panther Party, are vying for control of East Baltimore's potential as the largest bloc of black votes in the city. For better or

worse, its political groups have been fragmented to swing in any direction.

Dunbar High School is situated almost in the center of black East Baltimore. Directly south of the school lies a public housing project. Its residents are regarded as stable, its homes are well-kept, and there is relatively little crime. Another housing project to the west is badly lit and crime-ridden. The neighborhood to the north, much of which is scheduled for urban renewal, is the worst of all. Crime of all kinds flourishes there, run-down bars and restaurants occupy almost every corner, the dope traffic is heavy, and on weekends local sports close off a short block with parked trucks and run an all-night "big money" crap game. Johns Hopkins Hospital occupies most of the land to the east of the school.

A once-proud institution that numbers U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall among its former students, the high school named for a major Negro poet had, in the winter of 1968-69, sunk to an all-time level of impotence. Its curriculum offered only courses that were standard in secondary schools 20 years ago, students found most of its instruction irrelevant to the realities of contemporary life, and it neither raised nor sustained the level of learning experienced in its feeder schools.

At this writing, Dunbar students are generally neglected both in and out of school. As one student put it, "Kids don't get attention from teachers or parents. The only attention they get is from the police."

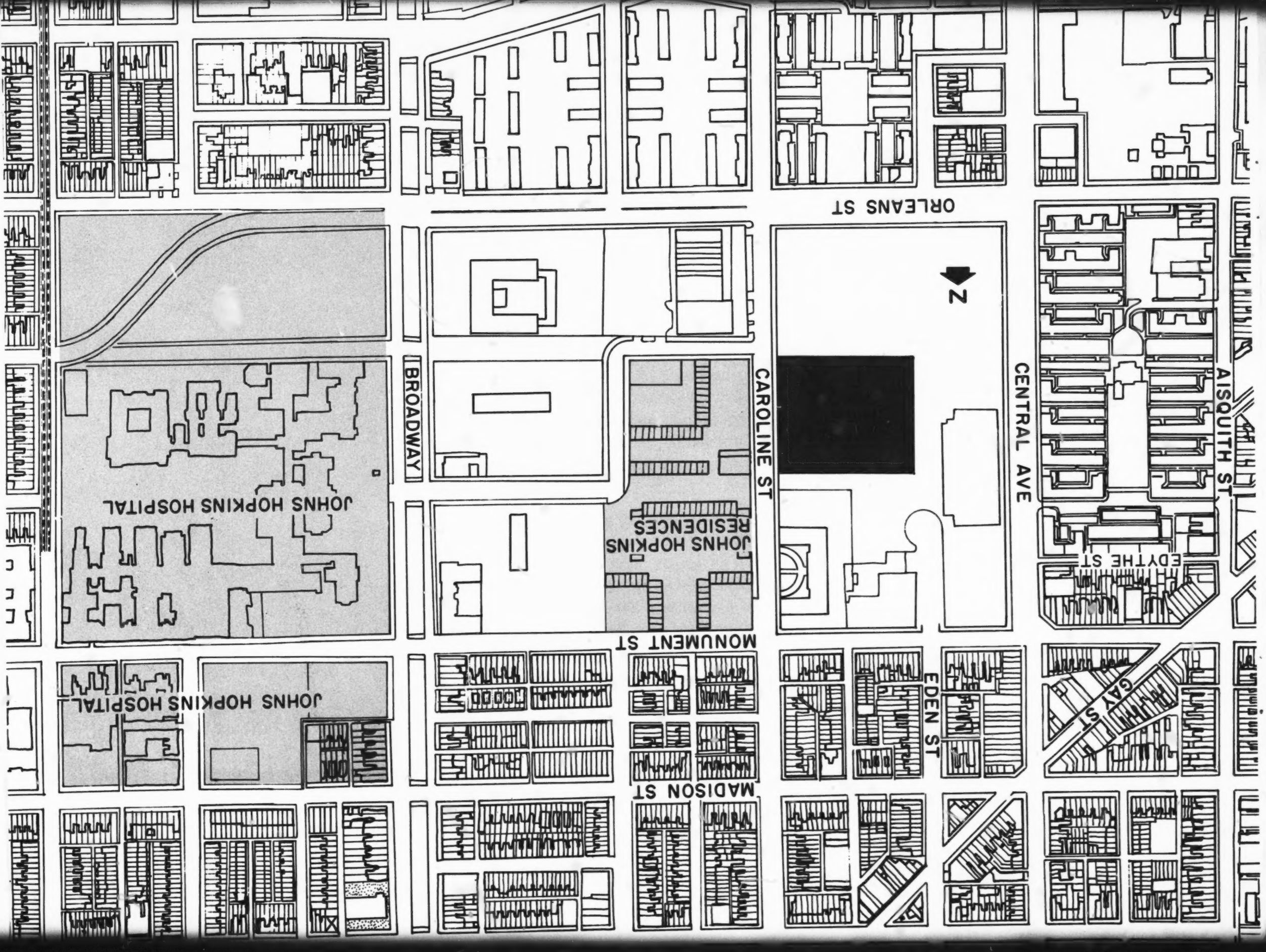
Furthermore, students are often too poor and too busy working for a living to attend school on a full-time basis. Families are large and neighborhoods crowded. Students lack the privacy, time, and space necessary for proper learning and growth. It is apparent to visitors that teachers as well as students lack motivation and seem only to perform the motions of education. The official drop-out rate at Dunbar, as of March, 1969, was 14.2 per cent—higher than any other high school in Baltimore—and many of the dropouts spend their leisure time, which is abundant, urging others to join them.

The school's physical plant is a patchwork of five buildings, some of which date back 54 years. The main wing, a four-story brick structure built as a junior high school in 1931 (the drinking fountains were never raised to adult level), is laid out in an L shape, with the main entrance at the angle, the auditorium and gymnasiums stacked at the end of the east-west leg, and the administrative offices and most of the classrooms occupying the north-south leg. The building is aging and its design is inflexible, but the structure remains solid and is kept in fair condition. Dr. Thomas D. Sheldon, Baltimore's superintendent of public instruction, regards it as a usable plant in need of renovation, feeling that "there is no physical justification for a new school, but the community desires one. I think that's terribly important."

Community sentiment, which focused on the physical deficiencies of Dunbar High School, actually arose from a complex of needs, most of them rooted in racial problems. Primarily, the Dunbar area residents harbor long-standing feelings of injustice and deprivation.

Segregation, de facto and otherwise, accounts for much of the resentment. And the attitude of Johns Hopkins Hospital administrators over the years also contributed substantially toward the general dissatisfaction, mistrust, and hostility which is felt by blacks in East Baltimore.

The Johns Hopkins Hospital complex, an expanding complex that now covers more than 32 acres, lies directly east of Dunbar High School. In fact, just across the street from the school, Johns Hopkins medical residents and their families have lived for many years behind a block-circling, chain-link and


ORLEANS ST
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MONUMENT ST
JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL
EDEN ST
GAY ST
MADISON ST

barbed wire fence (referred to by area residents, significantly enough, as "the wall").

Ironically, workmen began installing heavy wire mesh over the outward-facing windows of several homes on the same day that the charette opened at the high school. The fence, remarked one of the people in the neighborhood, plainly says, " 'Civilization here, savagery there,' " and that kind of impression tends to linger.

Moreover, Dunbar area residents refer to the hospital's enclosure as "the compound," which it is, literally, since the fence gate is closed and locked every evening at five. The hospital personnel and their families live in the "compound" as if they were members of the foreign colony in Shanghai. And the situation is further irritated by the fact that the homes occupied by Johns Hopkins residents—originally intended as low-cost housing—were supposed to have accommodated members of the local community.

About 25 years ago, the city demolished the block to the east of Dunbar High School, relocating its residents and promising its homeowners that they could buy back into the area as soon as new housing was constructed. Unhappily, the promise was not kept, and Johns Hopkins was allowed to move in instead. The hospital bore the major burden of ill will that was generated by the transaction and its lack of good faith toward the black community.

But the racial tension between Johns Hopkins and the black neighborhoods that completely surround it can be traced back much further than their differences over housing. Blacks and whites assert that in the past the hospital behaved like a "Southern" institution. Basically, this meant that it formed a solid pillar of the white Protestant Establishment in a Southern-oriented city, and incidentally, that few, if any, Negroes could work there in responsible positions.

During its first 74 years in operation, for instance, the Johns Hopkins Hospital School of Nursing had accepted only one black trainee. Fortunately, attitudes began changing about 1964, and there are now six Negro girls enrolled in a class of some 200, but the bias—and the reaction to it—has left a residue that is difficult to dissolve.

Such visual evidence as the fence and the window screens, and even the architecture of the hospital's newer buildings, testifies to the persistence of mistrust and antagonism. The latest of Johns Hopkins' annexes, the luxuriously appointed, contemporarily styled John F. Kennedy Institute, is surrounded by a high brick wall, and its windows face inward onto an enclosed garden. When the visitor passes through the institute's gate, he leaves East Baltimore and enters another, more gracious, world.

Both sides, of course, must carry a share of the blame for such a state of ill will. Black vandals create ap-

prehension and hostility by smashing windows and shattering bottles in the area, the neighborhood is considered "dangerous" by blacks as well as whites, and the center of the riots resulting from Martin Luther King's death lies only a few blocks to the north of Dunbar High School.

Obviously, these are not conditions conducive to pleasant relations between the black and white communities. They lay the groundwork for a striving that has been directed, for want of a more tangible symbol, toward the improvement of the only sizable public facility in the entire three-square mile sector: its high school.

The most recent campaign for a new Dunbar High School dates back to 1965, when teachers, students, and members of CORE staged a sit-in at the administrative offices of the Baltimore public school system. But the school's problems can be traced much farther back than that. It is almost certain that Dunbar was a disadvantaged school from the moment its student body became totally black. Perhaps it was always that way. In any event, the problem reached crisis proportions during the 1950's.

At that time, the school's 1,800-student-capacity patchwork bulged with 4,000 students. Some classes numbered as many as 50 students, teachers "floated" among several groups, and even the addition of five temporary classroom buildings in the schoolyard could not accommodate the overflow.

Crowding was eased somewhat by the school system's open enrollment policy and by a trickle of emigration from the area as people were relocated, but additional negative factors continued to contribute toward Dunbar's decline. Curriculum petrified, dropouts increased in number, and physical conditions deteriorated. In 1963, long-suffering students finally revolted against the food in Dunbar High School's cafeteria. At last, Baltimore's school superintendent gave in to mounting pressure and promised the Dunbar PTA a new school. Ironically, he died before the promise could be fulfilled. The Board of School Commissioners then decided to phase Dunbar out, transferring its better teachers, and encouraging ninth graders to enroll elsewhere, and subtly discouraging the remaining teachers from doing their best.

The open enrollment policy, meant to alleviate some of the pressures of de facto segregation, actually aggravated Dunbar's problems. While other high schools attracted top students by specializing in up-to-date academic disciplines, Dunbar lost them by offering an outmoded liberal arts, college preparatory program. It seemed to Dunbar faculty, students, and students' parents that the school was specializing in second-class citizenship.

Faculty members say that parents became discouraged and took little interest in the school. Students and teachers alike felt that parents cared nothing about their children. Teachers had the impression that they would be unable to obtain instructional materials even if they asked for them. Students believed that the very name "Dunbar" on a job application would result in their automatic rejection. Neither teachers nor students seemed interested in class attendance. Student morale sank so low that advancement from the ninth through the twelfth grades to graduation carried no social prestige within the student body. Dunbar did not even publish a school newspaper, although its print shop was fully capable of turning one out.* The school's population gradually dropped below capacity, supplies became hand-me-downs or dwindled to a trickle (the art department, for example, received a materials allotment of $600 in 1967-68), and its academic reputation

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* A school newspaper was founded soon after the charette.

fell so low that Dunbar dropped off the list of schools available for visits from outside observers.

Finally, in 1968, the PTA decided to try one more time. Linking their demands to a Dunbar Youth Task Force campaign for an athletic field (Dunbar has none and the nearest recreation field is 10 blocks north), a group of 15 parents and Robert L. Douglass, the area's only interested representative to City Council, met with the president of the school board and Dr. Sheldon (then only two months in office as school superintendent) and outlined their problem. They were answered with a $10.5 million slice of the city's Capital Improvement Plan.

Sheldon had favored the allocation on the grounds of a real need for a first-rate inner city high school—not physically, but as a fulcrum for community rehabilitation—and the necessity for additional instructional space in the elementary and junior high schools. A new Dunbar would return the old building to its original function as a junior high.

But what kind of a school would the new Dunbar be? The Baltimore Planning Commission recommended a structure, begun by 1970, that would accommodate about 2,000 students and be built on 4.5 acres of the 10-acre block now occupied by Dunbar High School, a small city health center, an indoor recreation center, and an elementary school. The prospective site, paved with asphalt, is currently in use as a school playground. Beyond these vague outlines, the page was blank. The Baltimore architectural firm of Cochran, Stephenson & Donkervoet was given a design contract after the charette was conceived and invited to participate in it instead of working from the usual obsolete educational specifications.

Obviously, to perpetuate the old administrative practices and curricula would be to subvert the purpose of building a new plant. The demands of the community for physical quality might be met, but, if the faculty and students remained unmotivated and the educational programs remained unchanged, the building would constitute only an empty palliative. Moreover, it seemed imperative to change Dunbar first from within—to change its intangibles—before any of its outlines took shape on the architects' drawing boards.

It was axiomatic that the new Dunbar should offer nothing less than educational excellence. If it offered a truly effective, first-rate program, it could compete with the city's other high schools for top students and provide all with an education that could equip them for productive lives. And with its proximity to Johns Hopkins Hospital, it could take advantage of that institution's facilities to conduct a paramedical program as its instructional specialty. In combination with a full program of comprehensive education, such an approach might return Dunbar to its position as an asset to the community.

Coincidentally, about this time (November, 1968), Walter E. Mylecraine, Assistant Commissioner for Construction Service in the U.S. Office of Education, wrote to Larry Reich, the director of Baltimore's Department of Planning, offering seed money to conduct a theoretical "charette" on an urban renewal area in West Baltimore.

Charette is a term borrowed from architectural usage. Literally, it means "cart" or "chariot," implying the speed of wheels or a race down to the wire, and came to be applied colloquially to the marathon designing sessions of architectural teams. In essence, it connotes a crash project, complete with deadline and around-the-clock brainstorming, and up to the time that Mylecraine applied it to practical planning, "charetting" was largely a professional, even student, exercise. The concept had seldom, if ever, included clients of any kind (and especially the general public), or consultants other than those immediately concerned with the structural aspects of design.

Mylecraine, reflecting a growing sentiment in the profession, felt that architects could no longer maintain their traditionally detached attitude toward design. He advocated that architects, rather than spending their entire planning time isolated from the client (which in the largest sense could be a whole community), should immerse themselves in the environment, closet themselves for a specific length of time with consultants and representatives of the community, and be directed to hammer out a design concept closely related to a total milieu.

Furthermore, at all points in the planning process, short of actually creating a structural design, the public would be intimately involved as a major participant. Lay representatives of the community would take part in brainstorming sessions and make their constituents' desires known. Professional consultants would listen, advise, mediate, and help compose a usable set of proposals or guidelines for the ultimate designers, and representatives of the community power structure—its decision-makers—would be directly confronted with these proposals. Ideally, the decision-makers would be involved in the guidelines' creation and would therefore find it difficult to disapprove them on the grounds of a lack of prior knowledge, of not having been consulted, of not being committed, etc.

Architects would take part in the discussions as professional consultants, Mylecraine felt, in order to translate the charette's proposals into concepts that could easily be used by other architects who would perform the actual task of design. In other words, the charette architects would pre-digest their fellow conferees' abstract ideas and feed them to their professional colleagues almost intravenously.

It was hoped that by meshing the community directly with professional resources and with those immediately responsible for public works and services, much time could be saved, red tape avoided, and closer liaison gained between client and architect. The decision-making process, particularly within the community power structure, might be shortened considerably—perhaps by as much as eight months—and converted almost immediately into a program for implementation.

Mylecraine first tried the new charette method (but without community participation) in Columbus, Ohio, during the spring of 1968. At the conference, the Ohio State University School of Architecture played host to 65 professionals and students from all over the country. For two weeks, the charette dealt with school-related urban problems in Atlanta, Philadelphia, Hartford, and Baltimore in an intensive series of dialogues and produced programs which were then submitted for further consideration in three of the four cities.

A second charette was held for a week in January, 1969, when the University of Maryland's School of Architecture at College Park, Maryland, gathered some 50 students and professionals to confer in a charette with a wide variety of citizens from Calvert County, Maryland. The object: to help that predominantly rural county assess its master plan in relation to the future of its total education program.

The Calvert County charette proved successful, but it grappled with a relatively simple set of social problems. How would a charette work under difficult circumstances, i.e., in an urban area beset by poverty, poor housing, political impotence, and racial tensions? Larry Reich, who saw the charette as a catalyst for social and physical rejuvenation, suggested that Mylecraine switch his seed money to the Dunbar project as an experiment in community school planning under complex, even explosive, conditions.

Mylecraine consented, and, in doing so, initiated a search for answers to questions even more fundamental than those concerned with the shape of a school. The task of the Dunbar charette was a critical one. Since Dunbar is an urban school located in an inner city burdened with alienation and deprivation, it was assumed that Dunbar's difficulties are inextricably entangled with almost every other social and economic problem plaguing the area.

During preliminary planning workshops that began two months before the charette, it was decided that every effort should be made to involve the community at all levels. Even more than that, the community was to play a dominant role. Although various experts would be brought in to take part in the charette, they would remain only as resource personnel, providing information and technical assistance, translating policy statements into specific directives, and organizing masses of information into logical systems. It was agreed that they be only consultative in the realm of decision-making.

Subsequently, the Community Council, meeting with all concerned groups, formed a "Dunbar Charette Steering Committee." Mrs. Hattie N. Harrison, a teacher at Dunbar High School and chairman of the Dunbar Community Council, was named general chairman; Melvin Moore, Jr., a field coordinator for the Baltimore Community Schools program, was chosen as executive chairman; Mrs. Rosie S. Keene, a claims investigator for the local office of the Social Security Administration, was designated as secretary, and Dr. James Haywood Harrison, a group dynamics expert, associate professor of education at Morgan State College, Baltimore, and a Dunbar High School graduate, was named charette chairman. This group was charged with the administration of the charette and later with forming the nucleus of a council that would oversee completed educational specifications and detailed plans for the new school.

The steering committee, aided by the city planning department and the office of the school superintendent, solicited funds from various interested groups. The U.S. Office of Education contributed $10,000; the Baltimore City Department of Planning gave $5,000, plus the services of Harold Young, its chief planner, and his staff; the Baltimore public school system gave $8,000; the State Board of Education gave $17,000 to make a total of $40,000 for defraying the expenses of administering the charette, housing guest-participants in a nearby hotel, and paying official representatives, consultants, and administrators.

The steering committee designed the charette format to run for two weeks without scheduled days off and with daily discussion groups meeting from 9 a.m. until their business was completed in the evening. Participants would be given two hour periods for lunch and supper, and cafeteria privileges were obtained at a nearby Johns Hopkins residence hall. The Sheraton-Baltimore Inn on the block between Dunbar and the hospital would provide housing for charette participants and evening conference rooms when the school was closed.

Following an initial two-day orientation period, charette participants would be assigned to four dialogue or discussion groups designated according to subject, i.e., Community Services, Educational Processes, Manpower Development, and Community Development. Each would be led by a representative of the lay community and aided by one or more of the resource people.

For six days, these dialogue groups would brainstorm, exploring as many aspects of school planning as possible without considering the practical economics or the feasibility of programs beyond those that might be beneficial for Dunbar's students or their community.

Dialogue leaders, as well as consultants, would be told not to inhibit discussion, particularly that of a visionary nature, and would be given no rigid structure to follow in conducting their sessions. Their task was to guide their groups toward consensus which would be developed into more formal programs or proposals. These could be translated into community development plans and educational specifications, although the charette was not expected to produce such an organized entity.

In order to expose the dialogue participants to the broadest possible range of subject matter, the steering committee planned to rotate each group of laymen every day and a half, while the resource personnel remained stationary. It might have been simpler to rotate the experts, at least from a physical standpoint, but it was thought that the act of moving community residents from one conference area to another would emphasize the change of subject and make the separation clearer in the minds of the conferees. Each evening after supper the resource personnel would convene to summarize the day's discussions and refocus them for the following day.

After the six days of discussion, a two-day critique and reshaping period would allow the four dialogue committees to distill their ideas into tentative proposals, which would then be aired in a "citizens' confrontation," a method, like that of the old-fashioned town meeting, for airing ideas in the community. Following that, another day of refining would prepare proposals for a critique and a final "confrontation" with citizens and public officials. The entire process would culminate on the 13th day with a last critique and a formal presentation of proposals, followed on the 14th day by an architectural presentation which could be translated into directives for the steering committee.

In general, the charette followed the course that the steering committee had charted for it. Discussion-

group leaders were chosen from among those area residents most respected for their stability, talent for working with others, and skill at getting things done. The result was that the dialogue sessions were headed by a postman named Nathan Irby, a teacher's aide and mother of eight named Lucille Gorham, and James R. Tyler and Samuel Sawyer, both Community Action Agency organizers. All were highly articulate and active in the community. Mrs. Gorham, in fact, was a member of six neighborhood uplift groups.

Initially, discussion-group membership was intentionally random. Rotation of the dialogue topics gave everyone full exposure to them, and, later, group leaders were rotated, too, in an effort to add another dimension and overcome subject-overlap among the four committees.

Once the dialogue leaders were chosen, they were given a short course in leadership; the techniques of group dynamics, identification of the roles people play in groups, the purposes of various discussion participants, simple methods of drawing out ideas and stimulating free discussion.

In its briefings, the charette administration emphasized the need for a diversity of opinion, sensitivity to group reactions and requirements, and total participation. Group leaders were instructed not to be concerned about the intensity of views or their sources, and to avoid constricting structure while moving discussion toward general goals, obviously a difficult task despite the fact that the steering committee furnished each chairman with a working outline of subjects to be covered.

Consultants were recruited from as far away as Houston, Kansas City, and Dayton, Ohio, to serve as resource personnel attached to each discussion group. They included architects, city planners, educators, economists, sociologists, and graduate architecture students from Cornell University and Hampton Institute (Virginia), and students from the University of Miami at Oxford, Ohio.

The Baltimore Gas & Electric Co., Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, the Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Rouse Company (developer of the nearby new town of Columbia, Maryland), Provident Hospital, Maryland Nurses' Association, the Baltimore City Hospitals, and the Baltimore Model Cities program, among others, also sent representatives.

In all, some 132 people, more than half of whom were drawn from the surrounding area, participated in the discussions, and the faculty and student body of Dunbar High School were represented full-time by 5 teachers and 8 students chosen by the student body.

Consultants and administrative personnel were paid professional fees, accredited graduate students were given stipends covering food, lodging, transportation,

and a small allowance, teachers were kept on salary (as were some of the consultants not paid by the charette administration), and community participants were paid $25 a day to offset in some measure the amount they lost by this extended absence from their regular jobs.

The first week was a quiet, arduous period of groping toward consensus. Burdened in its early stages with confusion, strangeness, imperfect knowledge, and racial tension, it seemed to lack any purpose save the single most important one: an overriding desire to plan the best school possible.

Gradually, as people warmed to each other and their subjects, obstacles diminished, goals and concepts emerged and assumed sharp focus, and proposals were organized into a program for use by the architects. Above all, the charette was an educational experience, not only for the dialogue participants, who were singularly enlightened by their labors, but also for the students of Dunbar and the visiting consultants.

The first day, a Sunday, was devoted to greetings and orientation speeches delivered in the high school auditorium, followed by a walking tour of the area for architects and other consultant personnel. Harrison, as chairman of the charette, set its tone and outlined a perspective:

> A charette is something more than a mere 'happening' where, in the jargon of the present, 'everyone does his thing.' In a word, we are here for the purpose of engaging in meaningful dialogue, the results of which will hopefully accommodate the design of an educational facility that will support the needs and expectations of a renewed community and student body.
>
> We have been summoned here to bring the collective intelligence of grass-roots citizens, parents, teachers, professional educators, businessmen, architects, professional planners, sociologists, health officers, politicians, and persons of various callings to discussion and preliminary decision-making with respect to the projected new Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. . . .
>
> The integrity of the charette is maintained best when there is a minimum of structure. This informal characteristic of the charette, however, does not rule out the importance of giving direction to our dialogue through the framing and acceptance of some questions which appear to be basic to all of our considerations. It appears to me, therefore, that we would do well to hold in mind answers to questions like these:

1 Who are the persons to be served by the new Dunbar High School? What are their basic characteristics?

2 What are the expectations of parents and the community for the new Dunbar?

3 What do we want to happen to the young people who study at Dunbar? What should be the characteristics of the Dunbar High School graduate?

4 Should the program offerings of the new Dunbar be diversified or specialized?

5 What kinds of special services do we envision for housing in the new Dunbar?

6 How may we define the roles of government, community institutions and agencies, business and industry, in helping to shape the new Dunbar?

7 What are some of the curriculum innovations and teaching strategies we would like to see operative in the new Dunbar High School?

8 What about the use of the new facility? Will it be for Dunbar students or for the Dunbar community? What activities do we envision being conducted in the new school that will reflect our philosophy about the persons to be served by the school?

9 What is our expectation with respect to human relationships in the new Dunbar High School? How will people served by the new Dunbar interact with each other?

10 What are the essential characteristics of a physical facility that will respond to the immediate and long-range needs of the Dunbar community?

These statements of the charette's broader goals, Harrison pointed out, were only one of its dimensions. Another, and perhaps even more important, was a commitment to "behaving in good faith."

"While we may all have come here with our personal and institutional hang-ups," he told the conferees, "it is my hope that we will not sacrifice the larger goals of this charette in pursuit of narrower, individual ends. . . . The Dunbar High School charette . . . must necessarily begin and end with a genuine concern for what happens to people. It is my hope that we will go about this business with sincerity, maturity, and positive thinking."

Although this keynote speech was to find its echo in the general character of the charette (indeed, the conference eventually seemed an oasis of harmony and sweet reason, invaded periodically by marauders from the encircling dissonance), very little of its mood was evident on the first day. The day, in fact, was characterized by confusion and mild tedium and surrounded by an air of relief (that the project had actually begun) and skepticism (that it would produce concrete results).

The sense of confusion deepened on the second day, when dialogue group participants—16 or 18 people to a committee—were assigned and began discussions in classrooms on the high school's top floor. This was a feeling-out period, and only the consultant architects, David B. Runnells, a city planner from Kansas City, Missouri, and Julian White, of the Houston firm of Caudill Rowlett Scott, who were accustomed to the unstructured form of the charette process, seemed to have confidence in the ultimate success of such an apparently diffuse arrangement.

By the third day, however, the discussion groups had begun to concentrate on the identification of specific goals. Dialogue seemed more frank and spontaneous, the various "role-players" had fallen into their relationships, and talk grew intense, even heated. By the time the groups broke for lunch, at least one—Educational Processes—was starting the process of evolving real objectives.

The evening's summary and refocusing sessions proved particularly valuable. The architects' meeting, in which graduate students reported on the day's dialogues, provided a general view of progress and revealed a surprising range of inquiry, from remedial education to a definition of a site for the forthcoming school. In addition, the meeting heard reports from graduate students who had spent the day visiting classrooms in an effort at determining the instructional needs and desires of both faculty and students.

Lunch on the fourth day marked the first group-

rotation cycle. But before that change interrupted discussion, the Educational Processes group—highly productive under Mrs. Gorham's direction—had outlined a philosophy, a set of programming elements, and a list of desirable characteristics for learners.

The effectiveness of the afternoon sessions seemed dissipated by changes in subject matter, and much time was wasted in discussing material that had already been covered, but the evening reports (and again, particularly those of the architects' field trips) proved extremely informative. This time, architecture graduate students described observations made at the health and recreation centers that occupy the north end of the block on which Dunbar is situated.

Unexpectedly (at least for most of the charette participants), the architects were joined toward the end of their session by the discussion group leaders and consultants, who had been meeting in the hotel. It was soon apparent that Harrison had called the informal convocation for the purpose of conducting a kind of pep rally, a device to establish his administrative authority, urge increased productivity, refocus activity, and allow "charetters"—who had begun to suffer the strains of confinement, excessive concentration, and boredom—to let off steam.

As expected (and under the goading of the charette administration), the session grew highly emotional. Much of the racial tension that had lain dormant or been inhibited during the separate group discussions was coaxed out into the open and apparently expended. At least, the next morning's dialogues seemed more relaxed.

Early on the fifth day, maintenance men moved tables, chairs, blackboards, wooden sawhorses, and plywood panels into the gym, and all discussion groups shifted into that echoing space in an effort to create a freer, less formal atmosphere. The high-ceilinged room was divided into quadrants—at least visually—by lining up blackboards, gymnastic equipment, and mats laid over parallel bars, and each dialogue group was assigned to a section. Acoustics proved too poor for productive discussion, however, and within a short time the conferees had begun to trickle back into adjacent classrooms.

At this point, in an attempt to help dialogue participants visualize evolving concepts, and to aid in refining them, the architecture students, under Julian White's direction, began producing short-order graphic representations of the ideas developed by each discussion group. As subjects came up in the dialogues, an architecture student would represent them diagrammatically on the blackboard. While members of the group criticized, he changed his drawings. When the group seemed satisfied with them, he would retire to the graphics workshop—set up in the gym by laying plywood panels over sawhorses—reproduce the diagram in color, using felt-tip markers on butcher paper, and return to the dialogue before its participants had lost touch with their concept.

Late on the fifth day, for the first time in the charette, one of the discussion groups produced a proposed outline of functions for the new school. Significantly, the milestone was passed by the Community Services committee (now under Mrs. Gorham's chairmanship), which began with the idea of locating a family health center in Dunbar and expanded it to include a creative arts center and low-income housing. The step was a clear move in the direction of specific proposals.

Again, the evening session began quietly with recapitulations of the day's activities, but soon erupted in charette administration chastisements of the Manpower Development group, which had apparently been infiltrated by obstructionists and was spending most of its time discussing subjects completely foreign to its purview.

On the sixth day, the dialogue participants again

changed rooms and subjects, and discussion leaders abandoned all attempts to hold general sessions in the gym. Much time was wasted in repetitive discussions, and the situation was aggravated by black power advocates, who attempted to disrupt dialogues by haranguing serious participants with slogans, charges of pandering to the white Establishment, and taunts of "Who's going to control the new Dunbar?" Moderate members of the groups discouraged these tactics, refused to become embroiled in fruitless arguments, and, with the sympathy and encouragement of the charette administration, effectively neutralized the disruptive elements.

Another general session in the evening reviewed the day's progress and heard Dunbar student proposals for curriculum, programming, and facilities in the new high school.

On Saturday, the seventh day of the charette, the pace began to tell. People were visibly fatigued, weekend activities tempted some away from the meetings, and family ties exerted a strong pull. Attendance was off by about a third. In an effort to enliven the sessions (and perhaps at further neutralizing dissident influences), the administration asked dialogue leaders to shift groups. The day's activities were suspended early, without a general meeting.

By the following day, attendance, particularly among the community participants, had fallen off markedly. Everyone was tired, and the dialogue group meetings which had begun late and ended early, had accomplished very little.

Monday, which officially inaugurated the "critique" period of the charette, saw the introduction of specific proposals into the discussion groups. Over the weekend, group leaders and consultants had prepared tentative proposals based on consensuses developed during the previous week and were offering them in the session for criticism and refinement.

Here, a tendency to deflate all concepts appeared, and both committee heads and experts felt obliged to remind dialogue participants constantly that visionary thinking was still valid and that to reduce all proposals to stark practicality at this point would be to inhibit the flow of ideas or stifle them completely in quibbling.

On Tuesday, the tenth day of the charette and one officially designated as another period of proposal criticism, and refinement, architects Runnells and White began to feel the pressure of the approaching deadline. They complained of the constant demands for their services as discussion-group consultants and diagram-drawers, and felt that the dialogues did not help to formulate goals from which they could develop programming criteria which would later enable them to establish planning concepts. The result was that they rebelled and closeted themselves with the

architectural students in the hotel, away from the dialogue sessions, and began sketching on the basis of those proposals that seemed most logical and least likely to be altered.

The next day found them still closeted, working on visual representations of site alternatives. Later in the day, they moved their work into the northwest corner of the gym and walled themselves off with makeshift plywood partitions. Outside this pale, the gym was being readied for the charette's first major "confrontation."

After lunch on the eleventh day, the charette administration conducted a symposium, partly as a rehearsal for the evening's confrontation, and partly for the purpose of involving some of Baltimore's decision-makers in the planning process.

A reporting panel, composed of the charette's dialogue leaders, presented proposals from each of the four discussion groups, and a reacting panel gave its views in return. The reacting panel consisted of Dr. Russell A. Nelson, president of the Johns Hopkins Hospital; Robert Moyer, deputy commissioner of housing and community development for Baltimore City; Dr. Thomas D. Sheldon, superintendent of public instruction for the Baltimore City Public Schools, and Alfred Ramsey, chairman of the Volunteer Council on Equal Opportunity and former president of the Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. About 100 people, many of whom represented business and industry in Baltimore, were on hand to hear the discussion.

The session remained relatively quiet until Samuel Sawyer, chairman of the Educational Processes group at that time (he had been shifted from his original assignment), accused Johns Hopkins of not committing itself to a list of courses that the hospital would like to see incorporated in the proposed Dunbar curriculum.

Nathan Irby, then chairman of the Community Services committee, asked Dr. Nelson if he would commit himself to the community. Dr. Nelson complied in one area: He promised that Johns Hopkins would not expand west of Broadway.

At that point, Mrs. Hattie Harrison, the charette's general chairman, asked Dr. Nelson from the floor if he was ready to pull the fence down, and the symposium exploded into a flurry of emotional exchanges revolving around the hostility between Johns Hopkins and the Dunbar area residents. The outburst was short-lived, however, and the meeting finally ended peaceably.

In the evening, there were again about 100 people on hand, but this time most of them were community residents. As in the afternoon session, the group leaders presented their proposals at length, and the meeting proceeded quietly.

After the confrontation, the architects—increasingly apprehensive over the proximity of the deadline—held a caucus with the charette administration, discussion leaders, and Sheldon, and demanded definite proposals. They felt that what had been done so far was not refined enough, despite the fact that they (the architects) had begun to evolve a list of goals and concepts. Furthermore, they said, they needed information concerning the following:

- Funding and additional sources of support for specific portions of the educational program.
- Curriculum development.
- Educational specifications.
- Documentation and recording of the Dunbar planning process as it progresses to its final conclusion and resolution.
- Nature of the instructions to be delivered to the contract architect.
- Feedback from the contract architects and continuing dialogue as the program progresses.

Subsequently, they received answers to their ques-

tions and reassurances from Sheldon and Harrison concerning the continuing conduct of the planning and implementation processes.

On Thursday, the twelfth day of the charette, Harrison began applying pressure. He called on the discussion groups for positive orientation, further definition of proposals, and combination of the Educational Processes and Community Services Committees into a single group. The Manpower Development committee, which had experienced constant difficulty in defining its goals (and even its topics), was still floundering. The charette chairman decided to assume temporary leadership of the group in an effort to guide it toward specific proposals, and within a short time it was making progress. Runnells, White, and the architecture students remained barricaded behind their plywood fence in the gym, working feverishly to meet a deadline only two days away.

The charette appeared strikingly changed on the following day. The Educational Processes group had evolved a curriculum, and Community Services and Manpower Development had developed priorities, i.e., (1) educational development for the total community, (2) economics, (3) housing, (4) health, and (5) site location. All dialogue groups had focused sharply on the major components of a school plan, and the architects said they were ready to brief conference leaders and contract architects on their forthcoming presentations.

In the evening, the community was invited for a final confrontation. About six black militants distributed literature, but they were unable to influence the predominantly moderate audience. By this time, the charette proposals were nearly in final form, and they were outlined in detail by the four committee chairmen.

The Educational Processes group had been most specific. Approaching its task from the basic standpoint of school entry, its members had thoroughly reexamined the Dunbar High School curriculum. The consensus report of the committee recommended a self-concept approach to high school entry that would provide the individual with whatever information was available about him which would supplement concerned counseling.

Furthermore, the group recommended "a highly individualized approach to education"; banishment of any semblance of a track system; a more flexible learning environment in which "threats of reprisal, failure, and embarrassment are minimized"; programs designed to enable individual learning programs to be matched "with specific performance measures and objectives"; and the "contract" system as a basic scheduling method.*

"In effect," the report stated, "we would be creating laboratories or theaters of learning which would permit almost every course to be programmed in several different ways."

Other recommendations included in-service training for teachers, establishment of health and data processing "careers channels" and expansion of the existing "business careers channel," institution of others, such as home economics and community and food service careers training, and founding of a "human resources development laboratory" as a job-market information clearinghouse and research center.

The Educational Processes group also recommended a new curriculum which would introduce at Dunbar such offerings as math analysis, calculus, industrial mathematics, creative writing, journalism, black history and culture, sociology, a fine arts major, a full

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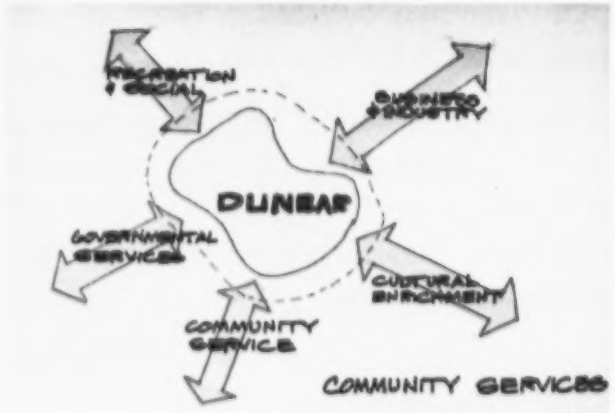
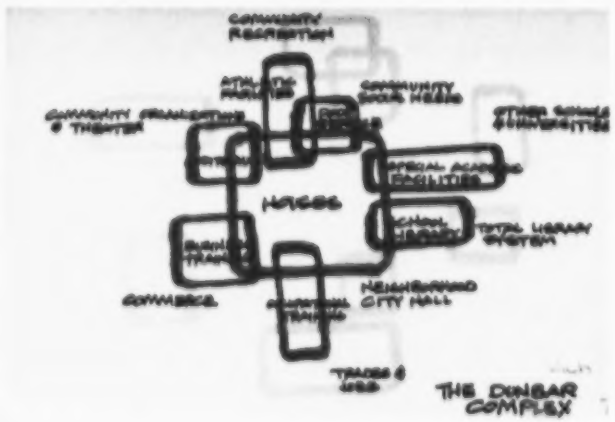
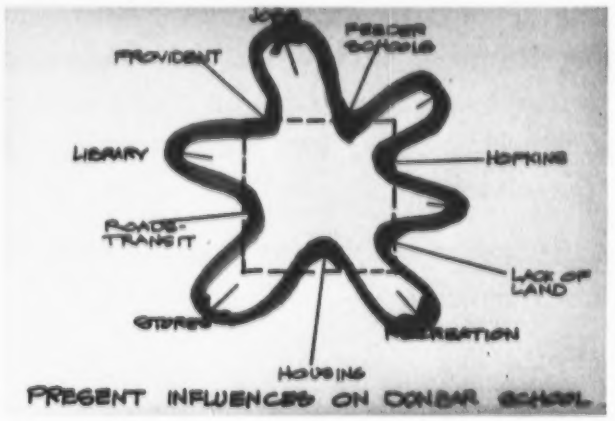
* The following definition of "contract" was evolved in discussions of educational processes by the charette: an agreement between student and school requires the student to satisfy specifically stated goals and objectives of a given subject area or occupational discipline.



COMMUNITY SERVICES



THE DUNBAR COMPLEX



PRESENT INFLUENCES ON DUNBAR SCHOOL

range of industrial arts courses, German, Latin, Russian, and Swahili, data processing, computer programming, and business law.

"We insist," said the Educational Processes report, "that the new Dunbar be regarded as a comprehensive high school and organized in such a way that the various career channels have programs which can be incorporated within the Dunbar operation with ease."

A self-concept laboratory, skill center, combined review board (composed of representatives of the community, faculty, student body, and central administration), student review board (for rating teachers and for student-teacher liaison), black culture center, and two principals—one for administration and one for instruction—were also among the concepts proposed by the committee.

The Community Services group was deeply concerned with the inability of Dunbar residents to cope with the overwhelming problems of a poor environment and the effect of that inability on a child's classroom performance.

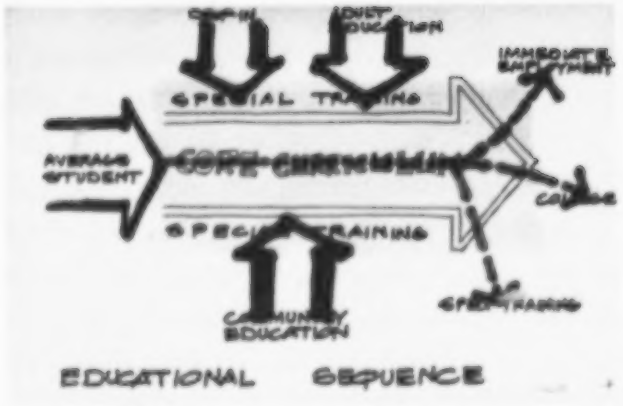
Among the committee's recommendations were establishment of a community service coordinating and referral agency; a thorough, modern, well-equipped and reasonably available library; a comprehensive family health center; a neighborhood city hall, including offices for a mayor's representative, councilmen, city sanitation department, social services branch, voter registration, police relations, legal aid, social security and worker evaluation, and job placement center; creative arts and recreation centers; a cooperative business plaza, including a restaurant-cafeteria, movie theater, pharmacy, bookstore, bank, grocery, and limited housing, possibly for school staff and students, and a child care center, all to be included in a Dunbar community-school complex.

The Manpower Development committee dealt in large part with "discriminatory practices that black workers face in preparing for and seeking employment in the Baltimore Metropolitan Area." It recommended a three-part educational program, consisting of a strong liberal arts curriculum, an occupationally oriented program of studies leading to careers, and "education for leisure," a program that would enrich the individual by training him for participation in community and cultural activities, recreation, and what the group called "think-tank operations."

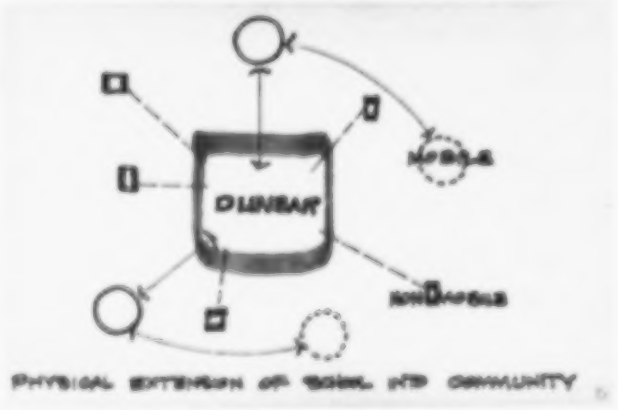
Specific recommendations included a job placement, career planning, and occupational counseling center; direct linkage between the Dunbar Community Council and the policy-making bodies of the Federal Comprehensive Work and Training Program and the Comprehensive Area Manpower Planning System for the Baltimore vicinity; establishment of a college scholarship and student aid fund; and a strong cooperative management and business development program.

The Community Development committee's work tended to overlap much that had been done in the services and manpower groups. Chiefly, it emphasized the focal nature of the new Dunbar High School and established priorities for the implementation of its decisions. The recommendations are summarized here in the order of their assigned importance:

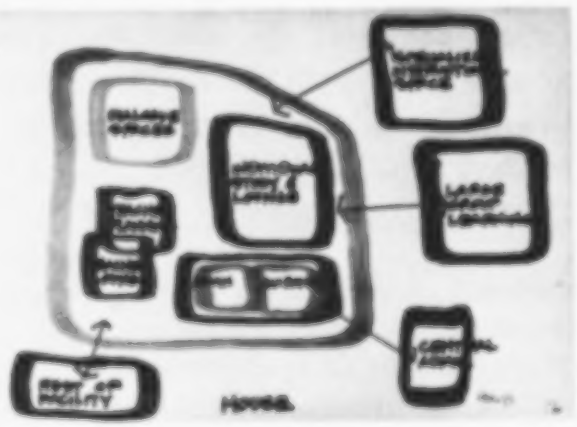
1 Educational program and facility development would begin by providing special advantages for children deprived by their circumstances and environment of the opportunity for a good education. In order to recognize mental and emotional handicaps at an early age, Baltimore service experts should develop comprehensive profiles of all children. The new Dunbar should emphasize comprehensive, rather than vocational, education. A junior college should be established in East Baltimore.



EDUCATIONAL SEQUENCE



PHYSICAL EXTENSION OF SCHOOL INTO COMMUNITY


HOUSE

2 Economic development would be aided by the organization of a community development corporation.

3 A system of coordinated, comprehensive housing development must be instituted in the community. Dislocation of inner city residents should be minimized. Existing housing codes must be more rigidly enforced in order to improve public and private housing.

4 Political development would be furthered by waging a pervasive campaign in the Second Ward to educate and register voters and develop a sense of political potency. The Dunbar High School Community Council should carry on the spirit of community involvement aroused by the charette.

5 Transportation can be developed by moderating the traffic flow through East Baltimore, updating traffic signals, speeding up the traffic flow on major arteries, controlling pedestrian crossings, creating specialized streets, and making buses safer.

6 Recreation and park development would include a stadium and field house, swimming pools, skating rinks, bowling alleys, inner-block and other forms of parks throughout the area, various kinds of playgrounds, tennis courts, community parks, and broader summer recreation programs.

7 Cultural development would involve integration of public school library facilities in the Dunbar complex.

8 Communications could be developed by founding a community newspaper, financed by business or the community development corporation. Television and radio facilities might be incorporated into the new Dunbar complex.

9 In considering site development, the most controversial discussion area, the group proposed taking an option on the plot of land to the northwest, bounded by Edythe, Monument, Madison, Aisquith, and Central Avenues.

The Community Development committee's statement concluded all dialogue group reports, and with these recorded, Dr. Harrison outlined a series of steps toward implementation of the proposals:

A draft of the reports would be prepared and reviewed on a continuing basis by the community council. This would give the council the opportunity to suggest changes designed to guarantee the integrity of the charette and maintain the quality of its product.

After incorporation of recommended revisions, a subcommittee of the Dunbar Community Council would prepare and review a final report and transmit it to the Superintendent of Instruction, who would review the report again and transmit it to the Board of School Commissioners.

During review, if issues arise which have no reasonable solution in consensus, hearings would be held in order to arrive at a new consensus.

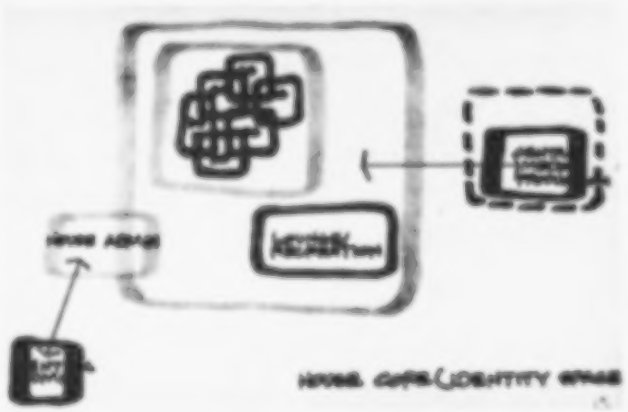
The final charette report would include a list of priorities and a set of agreed-upon recommendations for the implementation of the charette's concepts.

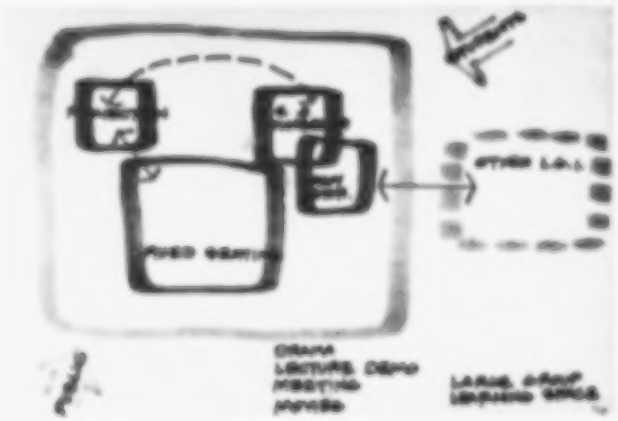
With the guidelines established for the new Dunbar High School, the fourteenth and final day of the charette was devoted to the consultant architects' presentation, Runnells' and White's elucidation of educational objectives, and an exhibit of site models, land-use sketches, and diagrams illustrating various aspects of the school plan.

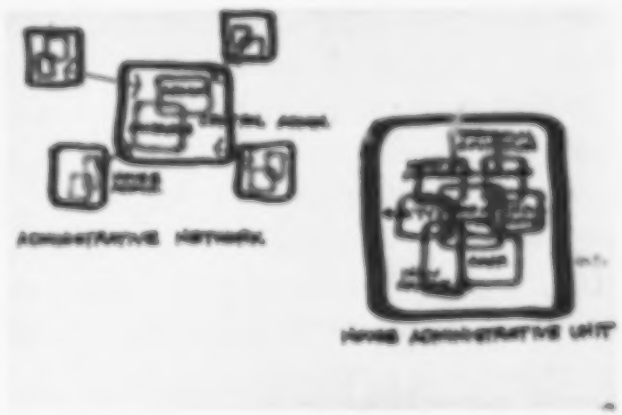
The architects interpreted the goals and concepts for the new Dunbar as follows:

GOALS

- A learning experience emphasizing the individual.
- Flexibility and growth adaptability; immediate, intermediate, and long range.
- A system of accountability for educational output.
- Interaction between students and faculty, between community and educational process.







- Self-reliance and confidence for the learner.

CONCEPTS

- The educational complex must be a social and visual focal point, a center of community activity, and a positive image for the community.
- A 24-hour educational community should be developed.
- The school must assist in commercial revitalization of the community.
- Physical and psychological barriers to the educational process must be removed.
- The school should be a center for the creative arts.
- The architects should assist in determining the optimum design module according to relevant criteria.

In conjunction with their abstract intentions, Runnells and White exhibited a series of diagrams representing the various forces influencing Dunbar; the school's projected educational sequence; its flexible and open scheduling methods, designed to allow student decision-making; components of a Dunbar complex, utilizing groups of multi-functional "houses"; physical extension of the school into the community; a mobile learning unit, similar in concept to a mobile health or library unit; a four-"house" educational grouping, with each unit containing administration and teaching spaces augmented by various attached subject, source, and service modules;

The components of each "house," a virtually complete school unit incorporating individual study and language learning, specialized instructional and large-group learning spaces, a central administration office, teachers' lounge, teachers' planning spaces, etc.; the "house" core as an area where a student can progress toward self-identification; interchangeable and variable dialogue spaces; large-group instructional spaces; total education centers;

A three-layer arrangement of facilities, with the lower devoted to special uses, the middle to common uses, and the top layer to educational house units, and beyond this on still another level the possibility of the development of individual dwelling units; a detailed diagram of the bottom, or special-use layer; a detailed diagram of the middle layer, a community of common facilities; and a detailed representation of the upper layer, consisting of educational house units and large-group instructional spaces.

In a very real sense, this final day's presentation was the crowning achievement of the charette, conclusive evidence that the process had worked. Although Runnells and White based much of their work on intuitive knowledge, there seemed little room for doubt that the painful, often diffuse, discussions and the laboriously evolved proposals had provided most of that knowledge, and, indeed, had formed a major portion of their creative efforts.

Whatever organization had resulted from the dialogue of the charette was superfluous. The real contribution came from the physical and emotional demands of the community. Now, the problem was to continue what had been started.

Appropriately, the final day of the charette did not end with ringing speeches and fine exhortations. It had the air of something unfinished, of a process interrupted briefly for rest, regrouping, and refocusing. There seemed reason to hope that the productivity of the process would continue, as indeed it has.

Summary and Critique

The Dunbar charette was an astonishing success. It began in ignorance and chaos and ended in something like enlightened order. Along the way, the East Baltimore community—"more a group of neighborhoods than a community," as one resident characterized it—created a highly sophisticated concept of an inner city high school. If the charette accomplished nothing else, it furnished a valuable educational experience to everyone concerned.

Physically, it sorted itself out into two very distinct portions, only one of which became the kind of process traditionally called a charette. Once, during the various discussions that took place in and around the dialogue sessions, Douglas Kingston, of the contract architects' firm of Cochran, Stephenson & Donkervoet, defined a charette as "an intensive period of work, not constantly creative, not always conducted in a group, but involving a rhythm and culminating in a creative process. It is a feeling, a state that develops within a framework composed of a problem and a deadline."

Perhaps even more precisely, a charette operates in much the same manner as a creative mind, ingesting facts, figures, impressions, and judgments, molding them into a set of practical guidelines, and finally producing concepts that can be translated into actual forms. At first it seems disorganized, but gradually, as the mind (or collective minds) struggles to organize the mass of information in which it is immersed, an order emerges that can be further refined into a useful, logical system.

Initially, a charette, like a free and open mind, absorbs a profusion of disorganized and even extraneous information certainly much more than it can use. At that point, structure inhibits absorption. It blocks random exploration and free association.

At some point, however—and perhaps that brake can be arbitrarily applied or applied when a moderator or monitor feels the probing has reached a place of diminishing returns—the charette must begin to consider specific goals. These goals offer standards against which information can be judged and extraneous material discarded. Then, as the charette guides (these may be administrators, discussion leaders, or even dialogue participants) decide what information is pertinent, a more definite shape emerges and is molded into a clear set of principles.

In these terms, the Dunbar discussion groups held a charette, but one that was very different from that of the architects. Or perhaps it was only the data-processing portion of a creative charette. (Here, the term "input," which was used by the Dunbar charette administration to describe gathered information, is particularly apt.) In any event, the four dialogue groups seemed engaged in something more like group dynamics, and the architects held what would traditionally be regarded as a charette.

The architects, in fact, were the only charette participants who really seemed to comprehend its processes clearly. Undoubtedly, this knowledge grew out of their familiarity with the form. The chaotic nature of the charette's initial phases, and the floundering, groping discussions that gradually formed themselves

into definite proposals and even philosophies, were all part of the architects' professional experience.

Aside from the creative tradition, however, there was excellent reason for using such an anarchic approach. Under the conditions prevailing in the area—its political fragmentation, its mistrust, both internal and external, its racial tensions, and its alienation from the total metropolitan community—all organization (and particularly organization involving whites) had become suspect. The apparently loose form of the charette provided an appropriate vehicle, not only for free and open exploration of problems, but for an evolution of solutions that offered not the slightest hint of imposition by the white power structure.

Racial tension—the hostility, suspicion, and lack of communication between the black and white communities—was in fact the charette's major problem. It was, of course, anticipated, and it made itself felt at every level of the conference. The black community had been lied to, disappointed, and patronized too long to have much faith in the expressed good intentions of the white Establishment. Thus the charette had to be black-administered and black-oriented. In fact, in order to exist at all, it had to have its very beginnings among those black citizens of the Dunbar area who were beyond all reproach as white sympathizers. Considerations of the school's position in the total metropolitan community had to be minimized, although leaders among the moderate black community recognized the inevitable necessity for an appraisal of Dunbar High School in the context of the total public education system.

Few, if any, of the charette's deliberative sessions remained untouched by racial issues. Obviously, those who would be served by the new school would be predominantly black. Parents, and the black community in general, expected not only a first-class education for their children, they demanded (as they were entitled to demand) the best: superior facilities, superior curricula, and superior teachers as well as superior administrators.

Such expectations alone caused problems; not because they were unreasonable or unwarranted, which they were not, but because they were goaded by deprivation, warped by emotion, inhibited by imperfect knowledge, and sensitized by racial antagonism. One of the problems that seemed to embody all of these factors was the question of the kind of subjects that should be taught at Dunbar High School.

Public school administrators and, indeed, many responsible members of the black community felt that the school should offer courses—in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins Hospital—leading to paramedical or medical careers. Many people in the Dunbar area took this to mean that the new school would be a vocational institution, and, since "vocational" implied for them not only a second-class curriculum, but the kind of curriculum that the white man thought suitable for the black, it was immediately rejected. "We want to prove that the ghetto resident is capable of more than manual labor," a sentiment voiced by a white clergyman in the community, was typical of the prevailing attitude.

The stigma was never completely eliminated, but it was at least minimized by labeling vocational program proposals, whenever they occurred, as "occupational education" or "career oriented."

Another, somewhat analagous obstacle arose because many in the community demanded a liberal arts or college preparatory program, as it is popularly understood, on purely emotional grounds, believing it to constitute a key to social equality, a status symbol, and a lever for removing the feelings of inferiority that had plagued them for so long.

Early in the charette it became apparent that a new

facility and a new curriculum were not all that East Baltimore hoped to establish at Dunbar High School. The new school was obviously the symbol of the black community's hopes and dreams and aspirations, and its citizens were determined that Dunbar would produce a different kind of graduate from those it had produced in the recent past.

In the new Dunbar, students would achieve confidence and self-respect. They would know who they are, and they would achieve dignity, independence, and a realistic attitude toward the world. They would come out of school equipped, not to accept a blue-collar, dead-end, low-paying job in a white-dominated organization, but to pursue a career in business, industry, or the professions that would offer opportunities to advance to the limits of their abilities.

Dunbar High School, its local supporters hoped, would help reverse their area's downward trend, provide a focal point for the community, and—if the building were to assume a high-rise shape or become part of a community center—perhaps even help provide low-cost housing for families relocated from urban renewal neighborhoods.

Such glittering possibilities all but overwhelmed many of the dialogue participants in the early portions of the charette. "It was as if the city drove a truckload of silver dollars into East Baltimore," observed one consultant, "and dumped it all in front of Dunbar High School."

Interestingly enough, the planners' dialogues also laid bare the fact that fear could actually be generated by discussions of East Baltimore's brave new school, a phenomenon that demonstrated how deep-seated were the suspicions of the black community. In one instance, fear was expressed that the new Dunbar might become "too good" for the average or poor East Baltimore student and would exclude his kind in favor of exceptional pupils from all over the city. In another, some members of the charette felt threatened even by rehabilitation of the Dunbar area, voicing apprehension that such activity was part of a plot to prepare the inner city for white occupancy—after the blacks had been "talked out into the suburbs." The "system" was feared, reality was feared, change was feared—and desired. At one point, someone demanded that the new school be built of concrete or stone; "We've had enough brick around here."

Perhaps the greatest fear of all—and it was neither irrational nor unique in situations involving ghetto schools—was that the black community would have no voice in the administration of its high school, that it would have no "control."

A great contribution to allaying such fears was the fact that most whites scrupulously maintained a "hands off" policy toward the charette. If the white power structure had any suggestions to make, it made them cautiously, after consultation with the leaders of the black community and through the black participants in the charette. Even the consultants to the four dialogue groups deferred to their committees' prerogatives, although there were times when the laymen's lack of knowledge must have taxed professional patience almost beyond endurance.

It is a tribute to the charette's professional participants, in fact, that they bore their burden silently. Their role was that of provocateurs, stage managers, and sources of information, at all times under constraints to refrain from intruding in or inhibiting discussion, and, early in the charette, it was decided that consultants were to be called "resource personnel" rather than "experts," in an effort to make it clear that they played a passive part in the proceedings.

The charette administration constantly cautioned consultants not to hinder the dialogues in any way. At one point, Harold Young (as a kind of unofficial charette-technique advisor) told Runnells and White

that the discussions lacked the brainstorming character of an architects' charette largely because of professional intrusions. And indeed, it was difficult to refrain from offering opinions. "But," said Young, "we're trying to free the institutionalized person from structured thinking. We're trying to get him to freewheel like architects and the man on the street. You're the arrangers. The community writes the music, and the charette leaders are supposed to fit it together."

Similarly, during discussion periods, there were often cries of "Let the talk move!" and "Let's let the conversation freewheel!"

Throughout, the charette administration seized every opportunity to encourage freedom and a diversity of ideas. When it moved all dialogue groups from classrooms into the open gymnasium on the fifth day, the shift was calculated to remove all physical restriction and encourage freedom, emotional expansion, and interaction between committees. Two coffee urns, also set up in the gym, were intended as catalysts or nuclei around which people from various groups might gather casually and exchange ideas.

The strategy did not yield a complete set of benefits. Unhappily, the gym's acoustics virtually prohibited intelligible conversation, and the groups moved back into their classrooms.

The charette was blessed with four excellent discussion leaders, without whom it could never have succeeded. Part of their personal success derived from their ability to lead without appearing to manipulate, an absolutely essential attribute in such a sensitive situation.

The federal representatives to the charette experienced some difficulty in this area. Walter Mylecraine and his aide, Thomas Clary, apparently felt that an essential concept—the "contract" method of scheduling—was being overlooked by the Educational Processes committee. Consequently, they briefed a willing Dunbar student representative, and he subsequently injected the idea for them into a gap created by the routine rotation of dialogue participants.*

The strategy worked, and the idea was finally adopted as a proposal, but many of the professional consultants to the charette expressed concern that it could have been used for less altruistic purposes. Harrison, in fact, felt that federal sponsorship of a charette carries with it some risks, among them being federal supervision or perhaps intervention, and Melvin Moore later cautioned against the participation of any bureaucracy (but particularly an educational one).

Although Harrison felt that the process is not as important as the results of human interaction, he insisted that "the planned approach violates the charette process." Like most of the conference's leaders, he agreed that the process—at least in its early dialogue stages—must be unorganized. In the end, however, many charette observers felt that everything surrounding the conference—its logistics, its location, and especially its preparation—must be carefully planned and highly organized. Dr. Harrison expressed the opinion that "the larger the group, the more decisions must be made about its structure."

A consensus of administrative and consultant personnel saw the preparation for the Dunbar charette as inadequate. Most of these shortcomings showed up as incomplete briefing and orientation sessions that were supposed to have taken place before the discussion groups met.

More important, however, many felt that the lay par-

* A danger that seems inherent in the system of shifting whole discussion groups among various separate rooms is the confusion created by over-lapping dialogues. Furthermore, the break in dialogue continuity creates a gap that might be utilized by those hoping to manipulate the charette or its results in favor of their special interests.

ticipants had not been adequately prepared for the dialogue sessions. Some in this group said that pre-charette activity should be highly organized in order to produce a wealth of background material for the participants. Three or four months before the charette, they pointed out, its administration, staff, and perhaps a study team, should be gathering and organizing material that could help the conferees understand the problems they will face.

Ideally, such material would consist of the unbiased facts: population figures, economic trends, land use, etc. Moreover, days, perhaps weeks before arriving at the charette, participants would be given information on the latest trends in educational methodology, technology, and philosophy, so they could study it and become familiar with their building blocks, the ideas which they would be able to call on in dealing with specific situations.

In this way, much time and energy would be saved. Indeed, a substantial amount of floundering, not for ideas, but for information, could have been eliminated from the Dunbar charette, and the educational experience, which is a basic part of the process, considerably intensified.

On the other hand, it might be argued that such intensive pre-charette briefing could limit the generation of ideas rather than stimulate it. Conceivably, discussion-group participants could assume that the ideas presented to them offered a complete picture. Or a biased charette administration could weigh the briefing material in favor of certain concepts. Considerable care would have to be exercised in order to avoid such pitfalls. In fact, some might feel that a completely unprepared group of conferees would be less inhibited and be more likely to produce fresh approaches.

Perhaps a logical compromise between intensive briefing of dialogue participants and no briefing at all would be better preparation of the resource personnel. At least that approach would minimize the dangers of biasing the lay members of the committees and would bring all consultants to a single, high level of information. In that way, they could provide a stimulus to the dialogue groups when necessary without imposing specific points of view.

In a situation like Dunbar's the ethnic backgrounds of resource personnel can be extremely important. Haywood Harrison felt that the Dunbar charette suffered somewhat from a lack of black consultants. He thought the experts would have been more effective —could have communicated more easily—if they had been black and that a greater effort should have been made to recruit such people.

On the other hand, it might be argued that ethnic linkage could hamper the charette process, since black resource personnel would be less objective and more tempted to involve themselves in the actual creation of concepts. White resource personnel might tend to let the discussion flow more freely without interfering unless specifically invited to participate.

Of course, black dialogue groups might utterly reject the advice of white consultants. One of the problems of the Dunbar charette was the discussion participants' resistance to suggestion. In their uninformed state, they were unable to distinguish between valid and invalid information or between biased and unbiased advice. The result was that they resisted all material until they were convinced that the experts were acting in good faith, and had to be educated to the point of accepting anything more complex than the popular, traditional notions of pedagogic method.

The same kind of education must take place on a community-wide level during a charette. In part, this can be acomplished during the "confrontation" sessions. But from a broader point of view, it should be the result of an intensive public relations campaign,

conducted before, during, and after the conference by a communications specialist attached to the charette. Such a specialist can alert the immediate community to its opportunities for participation and keep the general public well informed on the progress of the discussions.

The Dunbar charette was woefully lacking in this area. Not only did it fail to generate widespread interest within the community (attendance at both public confrontations never exceeded 150 people), but none of the editors of Baltimore's three major daily newspapers was sufficiently stimulated to assign coverage on a continuing basis. Such an oversight is partly attributable to editorial complacency, but much of the blame must rest on the shoulders of the charette administration, which failed to conduct an aggressive public relations program.

Internal communications, by contrast, were managed efficiently. The charette administration issued daily morning bulletins, giving schedules, news, and information about the conference's general progress, and also published recapitulation sheets each day wherein discussion groups reported their activities.

Some of the criticism leveled at the charette by its consultants dealt with these recapitulation sheets. Originally, Dr. Harrison planned to assign a graduate student to each committee for the purpose of taking notes on the discussions, condensing them, and writing precise summaries for consumption by all participants on the following day. The system operated effectively until its principals were needed for other duties, and the reporting function passed into the hands of casual volunteers. Eventually, trained stenographers took over, which was excellent for the charette's record, but did not guarantee a relevant summary, and the recapitulation series continued uninterrupted.

Several of the Dunbar consultants suggested that charettes could be used as laboratories for a limited number of student professionals and that these could serve as charette aides. The architecture students who attended the conference did, in fact, perform that function. In the future, however, a wider range of disciplines could be represented. Journalism students, for example, might render valuable service and gain beneficial experience as reporters for the discussion groups, a measure that could assure the charette of pertinent, daily recapitulations.

In fact, future charette administrations might find it practical to set up a communications center that would perform the crucial functions of public relations, internal dissemination of news and other information, and perhaps act as liaison between administration and discussion leaders.

Such measures indicate a growth potential for charette machinery that may seem ominously bureaucratic in its own right. But the amount of planning involved can be considerable, and much of it is necessary to nurture and protect the creative function of the charette form. An administrative center must be established, funds solicited and disbursed, personnel hired, meeting space obtained and allotted, participants recruited and assigned, supplies ordered and distributed, etc. There is, of course, the danger that the organization can grow until it overwhelms its reason for being, or that, being set up on an ad hoc basis, it fails to operate effectively.

It has been suggested that a set of guidelines be established for charettes, and Melvin Moore, the Dunbar charette's executive chairman foresaw the day when a group (or groups) of professionals, organized specifically to set up and run charettes wherever needed, would serve architects and urban planners throughout the country. Certainly, a body of technical information dealing with the planning and operation of charettes could be extremely useful.

Considering the absence of such an established framework, Harrison and his staff performed admirably. Meeting places were assigned, working materials provided, rest rooms designated, and the machinery of the conference in general was operated on schedule. Naturally, there were some who felt that further refinements would have improved the process.

A few thought that the discussion groups, which were each composed of 18 laymen and 5 or 6 consultants, were too large for comfortable interchange and that a better method of mixing participants could have been found. Others felt that dialogue leaders should have been restricted to a single general topic rather than being assigned to two. Harrison suggested that the high-school-student participants should have been indoctrinated before the charette to overcome what he termed their "here-and-now" orientation, their overriding concern with immediate annoyances.

Among the most prevalent concerns was fatigue. While some said the charette's two-week, continuous-session framework was too long, others felt the immersion technique was necessary, but could have been made more effective and bearable by reducing its intensity. Suggestions included some form of lounge space that would provide a change from the rigors of concentrated, uninterrupted discussion and a place for conferees to meet and talk informally. Still others went even further, advocating a mid-afternoon rest period, when dialogue participants might find time to relax, investigate problems on their own, or exchange ideas with their colleagues. Those who recommended these measures favored what they called "structured informality," which would function as a relief from the exhausting struggle against chaos that characterized the charette's initial stages.

Even the location of the charette was questioned by its consultants, although the steering committee had long since decided that a conference so closely identified with a community should not be isolated from the forces that called it into being. And, while this complicated matters, there was little doubt that the decision had been a wise one.

Perhaps, in the end, the location of the Dunbar charette, in East Baltimore, right in the school that constituted the object of its concern, contributed greatly toward the success of this planning session. Certainly, as one of the discussion leaders said, "it gave the grass-roots people an opportunity to be exposed to the experts and gave the experts a chance to meet the people."

That—and good faith—assured the triumph of the Dunbar charette.

Epilogue

Since the conclusion of the Dunbar charette on March 1, 1969, the high school and, indeed, the entire Baltimore public school system seem to have become suffused with its spirit.

A student newspaper was founded at Dunbar High School in March, study was begun for curriculum revision soon after, and, in April, the Baltimore Board of School Commissioners announced that it had engaged Caudill Rowlett Scott, school design specialists, to oversee an $80 million educational building program, using Dunbar as a prototype.

Subsequent events appear to support an evaluation made at the end of the charette by one of its most effective participants, a Model Cities Program administrator named Fred Clifton.

"Even if the school is never built," he said, "what has gone on here has made history."

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